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ABSTRACT

Because of the potentially significant effect that cooperating teachers can have on student teachers' philosophy, teaching strategies, and classroom behaviors, it is imperative that cooperating teachers be selected, prepared, and evaluated carefully. Certain attributes need to be present in effective cooperating teachers. A questionnaire was administered to 81 student teachers who rated their cooperating teachers on 24 critical tasks. Results revealed that the teachers performed 16 of the 24 tasks and needed more guidance in the remaining 8 tasks. The rated tasks are listed in this report. A brief description of the Partners in Education Committee is also given. This group's goal is to achieve greater collaboration between the university and the public schools for the education of new teachers. The committee was formed in response to the failure of the university's teacher education program to be in compliance with state requirements. Results from the study described in this report were used to design improved student teacher supervision and school-university collaboration. (IAH)

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The Importance of the Cooperating Teacher

There are at least two main factors to be considered when designing an effective teacher preparation program: The knowledge needed to be a teacher and the skills needed to present the knowledge. Both are essential. A program that focuses on one factor without the other cannot meet the needs of children.

Factors related to "knowledge" are met through university level coursework. Factors related to "skills" are met through university simulations (i.e., peer teaching) and on-site student teaching performance. Cooperating teachers are asked to provide the on-site role model that student teachers need in order to become proficient in combining the knowledge and skills in a classroom situation. Therefore the selection of cooperating teachers is as important as the selection of appropriate knowledge level curriculum. Because the potential impact a cooperating teacher can have on a student teacher's philosophy, teaching strategies, and classroom behaviors are immeasurable it is imperative to select the best teachers to help prepare beginning teachers.

The success of an educational system inevitably depends upon the judgment and ability of those who teach--the rest of the educational apparatus is "overhead." It is in the classroom that the pupil experiences the educational process; if the interaction between teacher and child is not effective, even the most sound federal, state, or local policies will be useless. Reducing objectives for the schools and

revamping the curriculum will improve public education only if teachers are of high quality. (Kirst, 1984, p. 137)

With careful selection and evaluation procedures in place for cooperating teachers, their effectiveness as educators for beginning teachers are enhanced. Even though the importance of appropriate selection and evaluation processes has been stated, it seems as if this factor is an overlooked dimension in most teacher preparation programs. There is research (Kirst, 1984; Brodbelt, 1980; Yates, 1981; Hoffman, Funk, Long and Keithley,1982; Conant, 1965; Zeichner, 1978; Henry and Beasley, 1982) stating cooperating teachers are important in the preparation process of beginning teachers. Heitzmann and Staropoli (1975, cited in Hoffman et al., 1982) and Hoffman et al. (1982) agree that the influence of the cooperating teacher on the preparation of new teachers is profound.

Brodbelt (1985) explains two critical steps that dominate the student teaching experience. The first is imitation and identification. The student teacher views the cooperating teacher as a model of good teaching and will imitate the teaching style of the cooperating teacher closely--patterning procedures, routines and style. The second step that dominates the student teaching experience is socialization using dependence attachment because the cooperating teacher is not only the supervisor but evaluator as well.

With few exceptions student teachers view their classroom experience teaching children as the most practical time in their educational preparation (Alverman, 1961; Wilson, 1985). The key factor in this process is the cooperating teacher. It follows, the selection and evaluation of cooperating teachers who help prepare beginning teachers

are critical to the strength and continuing growth of the profession of teaching.

Attributes of Effective Cooperating Teachers

Ellenburg (1981) cites Stratemeyer's work concerning a student of teaching in an effort to determine attributes of effective cooperating teachers:

> To become a student of teaching, the prospective teacher must be guided by a person of proven ability both to work with pupils and to work with and induct the neophyte. Beyond ability to demonstrate excellence in his own behavior, the truly professional teacher who works with a student teacher has the ability to help that student to develop his/her own style of teaching, to develop the quality of thoughtful independence that characterizes the professional teacher, to understand the values and principles on which he/she acts as a student teacher, and to accept responsibility for clarifying and extending these guides of action. To so work with student teachers, both within and without the classroom, requires special competence. (p. 203)

Sparks (1987) developed two basic lists of characteristics a university should consider when selecting cooperating teachers. The first list is a series of "paper screening" requirements that are relatively easy to observe, while the second deals with "unique qualities" that people who teach teachers need to possess. The "paper screening" requirements include:

- understand and can explain the basic goals of the University Teacher Education Program...
- show evidence of continuing personal and professional growth....
- accept self as an autonomous personality...
- participate in at least one educational enterprise as a volunteer
- be well organized and meet deadlines...
- have a philosophy that is well thought out and relevant...
- can specify at least five teacher behaviors expected of a student teacher.

The "unique qualities" include:

- Knowledge of subject matter
- Humanistic qualities
- Ability to diagnose weaknesses in a student teacher and corrective measures to be taken.
- Belief and emphasis on planning
- Good communication skills
- Promote professional qualities of teaching.

Kuehl (1976) conducted a study that focused on the most critical tasks needed by cooperating teachers. From 43 items, 24 critical tasks were agreed upon by 786 respondents. These are listed below:

1. Possesses professional characteristics/personal qualities
2. Assists the student teacher in making the transition from college student to teacher
3. Provides freedom to teach
4. Helps student teacher develop motivation strategies
5. Helps student teacher develop management and classroom discipline strategies
6. Understands supervisory role
7. Provides for evaluation of student teacher's performance
8. Provides for the gradual induction of the student teacher into teaching tasks
9. Willingly fulfills occupational responsibilities
10. Helps student teacher develop a positive learning environment
11. Conducts purposeful conferences
12. Orients the student teacher to significant elements of student teacher experience
13. Accepts the student teacher as a co-worker
14. Helps student teacher develop a wholesome self-image
15. Develops and maintains excellent helping relationship
16. Is an exemplary model of a "good teacher."
17. Helps the student teacher develop instructional strategies
18. Helps the student teacher develop his or her own teaching style
19. Helps student teacher develop human relations strategies
20. Helps the student teacher to become knowledgeable about students
21. Helps student teacher develop supervision strategies with students
22. Helps the student teacher develop instructional planning strategies

23. Helps student teacher develop communication strategies
24. Is capable of self evaluating own professional development as a supervisor of student teachers. (Kuehl, 1976, pp. 38-39)

The researchers concluded these attributes needed to be considered when selecting cooperating teachers.

Evaluation of Cooperating Teachers

In addition to the proper selection of cooperating teachers, once selected, they need to be evaluated. Chevrette's 1982 study concerned the evaluation of cooperating teachers by their student teachers. Honest evaluation tells people how they are performing their prescribed tasks. It also leads to enhanced ability and skill in performing their tasks. For teachers, evaluation can bring about growth in teaching skills and ability. For cooperating teachers, evaluation by student teachers, is an affirmation of ability.

Applying the Research

The researchers were seeking to determine the skills and attributes the current cadre of cooperating teachers possessed in order to offer knowledgeable and useful preparation for present and future cooperating teachers. An adaptation of Kuehl's questionnaire was designed and administered to 81 student teachers. They were asked to rate their cooperating teachers on 24 critical tasks Kuehl identified. In addition the student teachers were asked if they would be willing to evaluate their cooperating teacher. A space for additional comments was provided for student teachers to write about their concerns regarding the attributes cooperating teacher should possess.

The results from the questionnaire revealed that the cooperating teachers at the university-based teacher education program performed 16 of the 24 critical tasks outlined by Kuehl, and needed more guidance

in 8 of the 24 critical tasks. These tasks and their ranking by student teachers in our study and well as the ranking by Kuehl's study, follow:

Essential Tasks of Cooperating Teachers	Mean	Rank	Kuehl's Rank
Willingly fulfills occupational responsibilities	3.494	1.5	9
Accepts the student teacher as a coworker	3.494	1.5	13
Possesses professional characteristics/ personal qualities	3.481	3	1
Provides freedom to teach	3.475	4	3
Helps the student teacher to become knowledgeable about students	3.432	5	20
Helps student teacher develop a wholesome self-image	3.346	6	14
Develops and maintains excellent helping relationship	3.272	7	15
Provides for the gradual induction of the student teacher into teaching tasks	3.262	8	8
Is an exemplary model of a "good teacher"	3.235	9	16
Understands supervisory role	3.212	10	6
Helps student teacher develop a positive learning environment	3.198	11	10
Helps student teacher develop supervision strategies with students	3.173	12	21
Assists in making the transition from college student to teacher	3.136	13	2
Helps student teacher develop management and classroom discipline strategies	3.123	14	5
Orients the student teacher to significant elements of student teaching experience	3.111	15	12
Provides for evaluation of student teacher's performance	3.099	16	7
Helps the student teacher develop instructional strategies	2.975	17	22
Is capable of self-evaluating own professional development as a supervisor of student teachers	2.949	18	24
Conducts purposeful conferences	2.938	19	11
Helps student teacher develop human relations strategies	2.925	20	19
Helps student teacher develop motivation strategies	2.914	21	4
Helps student teacher develop communication strategies	2.835	22	23
Helps the student teacher develop his or her own teaching style	2.827	23	18
Helps student teach develop instructional planning strategies	2.778	24	17

Sixteen critical tasks received mean scores above 3.0 indicating a rating of "good" or "excellent." These are ranked 1 through 16 on the chart.

Eight tasks received mean scores below 3.0, indicating a rating of "needs improvement" and/or "not apparent" and are listed on the chart above with the ranks of 17 to 24.

Partners in Education (PIE) Committee

Concurrently with this project, the teacher education program at the University was being reviewed by the State for compliance. The program was found to be out of compliance with State requirements and put on probation for one year. One of the recommendations the State made indicated a need for a closer relationship between the university and schools were student teachers were placed. This led to the creation of the Partners in Education Committee (PIE). The goal of the PIE committee is to achieve greater collaboration between the university and public schools for the education of new teachers. The PIE committee is composed of representatives of every constituent and client group of the program: cooperating teachers, student teachers, on-site school administrators, university faculty, the coordinator of the undergraduate program, the director of the student teaching program, the chair of the Department of Education and the vice provost for Academic Affairs.

Another area of non-compliance was the qualification and evaluation of cooperating teachers. The research conducted from this current study was presented to the PIE committee, some of which was applied to a new set of standards regarding the selection of cooperating teachers. Please note the similarities between the skills and attributes listed above to those now required of cooperating teachers. The list follows:

1. Demonstrate effectiveness as a classroom teacher.

2. Become familiar with the CSU, Chico Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential Program.
3. Assist you in orientation to the school, curriculum, instructional materials, building, staff, school policies, students' age level characteristics, and special problems of individual students (including mainstreamed students, students with limited English, students with diverse or socially disadvantaged backgrounds.)
4. Succinctly and clearly inform you about the type of assistance expected in sharing responsibilities.
5. Aid you in developing rapport with students.
6. Direct you to resources useful in teaching.
7. Assist you in initial planning and confer with you regularly throughout field experience and student teaching concerning diagnosis, planning, evaluation, grading, and other classroom and instructionally related matters.
8. Provide consistent, constructive, and positive criticism of your performance.
9. Allow you to show initiative and creativity in trying innovative approaches to instruction.
10. Join your university supervisor in making suggestions for your improvement throughout the field experience.
11. Observe and evaluate your presentations and provide ongoing oral and written feedback.
12. Meet with you and your university supervisor for scheduled three-way conferences.
13. Write your final student teacher evaluation. (CSUC Multiple Subjects Program Handbook, p. 13)

In addition, based on the research cited above, a formal cooperating teacher application form was developed which includes such information as teaching experience of the cooperating teacher, number of student teachers with which one has worked, formal coursework in supervision, and interest in taking a supervision course, among other demographic items. A copy of the application is attached.

Creating a Family: Partners in Education

The Partners in Education committee is an on-going effort to create a sense ownership in the teacher education program at the University, by its constituency. To that end, the PIE committee

recommended using the results of this study for their purposes. PIE also recommended that cooperating teachers would be selected and evaluated using the same standard criteria. This one instance of overlap between the committee and action research is an example of how both communities can work together successfully.

The scope of the PIE Committee is limited only by lack of imagination. As an offshoot of a state evaluation, it has proved to be a powerful change agent. Because of the state evaluation, the university and public school communities have become more involved with each other than in the past. The continuing efforts of PIE will change in scope as needs arise. PIE has started the process for interaction among all members of the education community to further the potential of greater enhancement of the program for student teachers and thus the children of our community.

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